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Towards a Fiscally Constrained Pacific Posture

by

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TOWARDS A FISCALLY CONSTRAINED PACIFIC POSTURE

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ABSTRACT

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Historically, the United States has adjusted resource allocation as it emerges from a period of conflict. The Department of Defense has typically seen a average reduction in resources of approximately 30%, in what has been termed a peace dividend. Our current National Military Strategy expresses the intent to maintain a forward presence while pursuing an active engagement strategy. The Pacific area of responsibility will play a key role in this strategy but will necessitate several tough decisions in the face of diminishing resources. This paper will explore the impacts that resource constraints will have on our long-term Pacific strategy and provide recommendations for changes to this strategy that take those resource constraints into account.

TOWARDS A FISCALLY CONSTRAINED PACIFIC POSTURE

> It is important to note that we should not measure U.S. presence, and the associated impact and influence, solely in terms of conventional military bases. Rather, we must think more about U.S. "presence" in the broader sense of what we achieve in the region: the connections made, the results accomplished. And this includes everything from medical teams, to civil engineering personnel, to partner militaries that are more professional and capable of contributing to international efforts to deal with the most vexing security challenges we face.[1]
>
> —Robert Gates
> Former Secretary of Defense

President Obama, in his National Security Strategy, stated that "in the past, the United States has thrived when both our nation and our national security policy have adapted to shape change instead of being shaped by it."[2] As the United States ends its military presence in Iraq and prepares to begin its drawdown in Afghanistan, our global posture aperture will once again open as it did at the conclusion of the cold war. As we consider the optimum global posture with which to pursue our national interests, we must do so with an understanding that limited resources will influence our deliberations. This resource constrained environment will also necessitate a global posture that is balanced with our national priorities. The United States can no longer afford the luxury of permanently basing forces abroad as a way of maintaining a robust forward presence. A relevant forward deployed military presence remains crucial to the success of our national strategy but in the years ahead we must adopt a balanced whole-of-nation approach which achieves the effects that have, in the past, resulted from permanently basing large military forces abroad.[3]

On November 16th 2011, at a joint press conference with Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard, President Obama emphasized U.S. intent in the Asia Pacific region when he stated that "we are two Pacific nations, and with my visit to the region I

am making it clear that the United States is stepping up its commitment to the entire Asia Pacific (region)."[4] The importance of the Asia Pacific region has also been underscored by the recent travels of our Vice President, Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who have all visited the region in the past eight months. Relative prosperity in the Asia Pacific region over the past several years has compelled the United States to leverage Asian economic success in hopes of reviving a stagnant U.S. economy.[5] Although the pursuit of economic prosperity has drawn us towards the region it is our existing security commitments and desire for regional stability that mandate our continued military presence in the region.

Chinese interests in the South China Sea, Taiwanese independence, an increasingly unstable nuclear North Korea, Al Qaeda-linked elements in the Philippines and Indonesia, and increased piracy along strategic lines of communication all define the security environment that currently exists in the Asia Pacific region. Additionally, the influences of natural phenomena such as flooding, tsunami, earthquake, and volcanic activity have the potential to degrade regional security while at a minimum increasing the demand for humanitarian assistance or disaster relief. As with any region, the blend of culture, religion, and wealth distribution characterize the human dimension of these security challenges. It is with this environment as a backdrop that our military and civilian leaders must develop a regional strategy by which to pursue our national and regional interests.

The United States currently maintains security agreements with five Asia Pacific nations. U.S. agreements with Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Thailand, and the

Philippines have endured for close to sixty years. Our contemporary ties to this region, formed in the aftermath of World War II, having played a key role in a successful Cold War strategy, continue to serve our interests as we pursue economic opportunity in a relatively secure region. While our ties have proven resilient, the United States must call forth all aspects of national power to assure regional security in the years ahead. William Tow, professor of international relations at the University of Queensland, makes this distinction when assessing the endurance of those security agreements born out of the Cold War. He states that "security has evolved into a much broader phenomenon than the restrictive, zero-sum, and exclusively inter-state concept which shaped that prolonged conflict (Cold War). It is an environment that is more receptive to pursuing national security objectives with good diplomacy and a sustained political commitment, than to perpetuating force capabilities in response to seemingly intractable regional and global threats."[6] Relevant threats continue to exist in the Asia Pacific region but the security dynamic has changed and the United State must adapt to these changes or face the reality of assuming unnecessary risk elsewhere.

Admiral Robert Willard, Commander, United States Pacific Command (PACOM), has articulated a regional end state which results in the protection of the United States, its territories and interests, and a stable, secure Asia Pacific region.[7] He intends to achieve this by synchronizing actions across the U.S. government and associated combatant commands, allies, and partners, maintaining security of the regional commons, deterring aggression, and maintaining forces prepared to accomplish the full range of military contingencies.[8] He further emphasized the need to focus on strengthening and advancing alliances and partnerships by building multilateral

relationships, providing a more effective presence, building capacity, and enhancing interoperability.[9] In fact, the need for greater partner capacity, increased cooperation and interoperability, and sustained military engagement are threads found in each one of our strategic directives and represents the way in which the United States will protect its interests and ensure a secure and stable region. Success will be based on our ability to adapt to a rapidly evolving security environment.

As articulated in the U.S. National Security Strategy, a whole-of-government approach is required to attain the world we seek.[10] As a nation, we can no longer rely on the capacity of any one element of national power to achieve our objectives. This becomes increasingly important as the Department of Defense prepares for a significant reduction in resources as operations in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down. Not unlike every other post conflict period dating back to World War II, this peace dividend will force the Department of Defense to reconsider the ways and means by which it provides for our national security.

The United States has experienced a significant reduction in national defense funding following the last four major conflicts as the nation has turned its focus toward domestic issues. Reductions after the last three conflicts averaged approximately 30 percent and forced the Department of Defense to make tough choices during these build downs.[11] Since September 11, 2001 our defense budget, to include supplemental funding, has grown by approximately 70 percent. The 2011 Budget Control Act reduced our Future Years Defense Plan (FYDP) by $465B over ten years. Additionally, the Office of Management and Budget has directed the Department of Defense to plan for a 10 percent reduction in funding when they submit their 2013 budget requests. Together

these two actions represent a combined 18 percent reduction in funding which may be just the beginning.[12] The Budget Control Act could result in another $564B in reductions over ten years if other deficit reduction measures are not identified.[13] Historically, military procurement bears the brunt of these post conflict adjustments. To put our current situation into perspective, our fiscal year 2011 procurement account totaled approximately $134B.[14] If the previous reductions do materialize, we could expect a yearly budget reduction of between $105B and $116B. A cut of this magnitude would have a significant impact on our operating, personnel, and construction accounts in addition to our procurement account. The House Armed Services Committee (HASC) published an "Assessment of Impacts of Budget Cuts" in September 2011, where they explored the potential impact to service end strengths if these cuts were made. In reference to the Army and Marine Corps the HASC staff projected a reduction of 200,000 service members. The report also forecasts a reduction of 30 to 40 Army maneuver battalions from 100 down to 60 or 70 and questions the Marine Corps ability to support a 2.0 Marine Expeditionary Brigade engagement.[15] It is important to note that the Budget Control Act focuses on deficit reduction and not debt reduction. If a concerted effort were made to reduce the national debt we could expect to see far greater budget cuts.

An Unbalanced Posture

Although our Pacific strategy has rapidly evolved since the end of the Cold War, our posture in that region has failed to keep pace. Our Pacific posture remains balanced towards a nonexistent Soviet threat, does not account for the capacity of our regional partners, and is positioned such that it unnecessarily holds our forces at risk to regional

threats. Exacerbating the lack of regional balance, our continued resourcing of this posture, despite fiscal realities, detracts from the pursuit of our national interests in other regions.

Much of the United States' current Pacific posture is a result of the security environment that existed at the conclusion of World War II and evolved into a Cold War posture in support of our containment strategy. The United States, seeking to hedge against communist expansion, assumed responsibility for the defense of Japan and quickly massed forces on mainland Japan and the island of Okinawa. When North Korea crossed the thirty-eighth parallel five years later in June of 1950, President Truman committed U.S. forces on behalf of the United Nations, a commitment that continues to this day.[16] Although the United States has maintained forces in other Asia Pacific nations such as the Philippines and Australia, the preponderance of our forces have been located in Japan and South Korea. The United States currently has approximately 73,500 service members forward deployed in Japan and South Korea.[17] Only 900 service members have been deployed to the rest of the region, while close to 13,000 are serving afloat.[18] As we consider whether our pacific posture supports our national and regional strategies we must address three questions; First, are the forces based in Northeast Asia still serving as an effective deterrent? Second, are these forces necessary for the defense of Japan and Korea? Third, do these forces provide strategic flexibility?

For the past 58 years our forces in Japan and South Korea have effectively deterred North Korea from launching a full scale attack against either nation. Aside from occasional limited acts of aggression and saber rattling in the form of rhetoric and

missile tests, North Korea has maintained a defensive posture. Speculation about what North Korea may do as domestic conditions further deteriorate is difficult due to their often times irrational behavior. Add to this the fact that they are aggressively pursuing a nuclear ballistic missile capability and we must accept that today North Korea represents the greatest threat in the region. Thomas Schelling argues that the capacity of one state to hurt another can serve to influence a state's behavior, thereby acting as a deterrent.[19] U.S. ability and perceived willingness to hurt North Korea is what has deterred them from initiating another large scale invasion. The United States currently maintains mutual security treaties with both Japan and South Korea which stipulate that the United States is committed to act on behalf of either ally should they be attacked. If North Korea were to attack, the United States would need to significantly build additional combat power in order to counter this aggression. These forces would have to be globally sourced based on our current posture in the region. If North Korea chose to employ nuclear weapons against the United States, Japan, or South Korea, they would do so with the understanding that the United States would respond in kind. The key to deterring North Korea is not so much based on what we are doing in the region, it is based more on what we can do if compelled to act.

The treaties with Japan and South Korea that remain in effect today were entered into during a period when both countries were devastated by war and left practically defenseless. In the years since our first treaty with Japan was signed in 1951, their military development has been hampered by constitutional restrictions and public opposition. Over time the Japanese have relaxed their interpretation of the constitution, allowing them to field a robust, technologically advanced self defense force

of 230,000 Japanese men and women. Japan's active component ranks twenty-fourth in the world, and while they still rely on assistance from the United States in key areas such as missile defense, their ability to provide for their own defense is sufficient.[20] South Korea, unencumbered by restrictions, has developed the sixth largest military in the world and one which is technologically superior to a larger North Korean military. While both nations would rely on U.S. support if attacked, their ability to provide for the defense of their nation has evolved over the past 58 years to a point where our immediate physical presence is not required.

Our treaty with Japan authorizes the United States to base forces in Japan in order to maintain international peace and security in the Far East.[21] The concept of basing forces in Japan to address contingencies in other parts of the region has come to be known as strategic flexibility and provides the PACOM commander the ability to conduct security cooperation activities without having to globally source additional forces. While forces have also been deployed from South Korea to support contingencies abroad, this practice has been very limited due to South Korean fears that an absence of U.S. forces may lead to North Korean aggression. In the future, the exercise of strategic flexibility on the Korean peninsula, because of its sensitivity, will require considerable policy coordination and thus not provide the PACOM commander a feasible tool with which to shape his area of responsibility.

The geostrategic location of our forces in Northeast Asia puts our service members and their families at risk, and complicates potential non-combatant evacuation operations. U.S. forces based in Japan and South Korea are all located within the Chinese threat envelopes for both ground launched short range ballistic missiles and air

launched cruise missiles.[22] Positioning the majority of our regional combat forces this close to a potential adversary, capable of inflicting significant damage, creates a critical vulnerability which could be exploited. While the United States cannot afford to completely withdraw beyond the first island chain; our posture should forward deploy only those forces necessary to support the theater strategy.

In addition to the 73,500 service members located in Northeast Asia, there are also approximately 65,000 civilians, with that number increasing as Korean Tour Normalization is implemented.[23] On the Korean peninsula alone the total number of US personnel is expected to reach 84,000 by 2020. Of the 84,000 personnel, the number of service members remains constant at 28,500. In the event that North Korea would attempt to forcefully reunify the peninsula, we could potentially have to evacuate close to 55,000 civilians, many of which live within 60 miles of the North Korean border based on relocation plans. Again, the United States will need to maintain a presence in South Korea but we need to consider the risk involved with forward deploying our families.

PACOM is currently transforming its military posture in both Japan and Korea. Through twelve posture initiatives, they look to consolidate forces, provide accompanied tours to service members in South Korea, and realign forces within Japan and between Japan and Guam.[24] The Government Accounting Office concluded a report in May 2011 that assessed these initiatives and attempted to do a business case analysis. Their analysis determined that the Department of Defense has not fully estimated the cost of these posture initiatives and that they would need to capture the comprehensive cost of our posture in addition to doing an analysis of alternatives.[25] In South Korea, U.S. Forces Korea provided cost estimates for construction costs but did not provide

estimates for operations and maintenance costs. The estimated construction costs for the consolidation of forces into two primary encampments and tour normalization is approximately $17.6B ($10.7B paid by the United States).[26] The inclusion of the operations and maintenance costs is important when we consider that through tour normalization USFK plans to double the number of families on the peninsula between now and 2020. Costs associated with housing allowances and family services will have a significant impact on their estimates but remain undetermined. The realignment of forces in Japan, which includes relocating a carrier air wing and 8000 Marines, in addition to moving a Marine air base to a less populated portion of Okinawa, is currently estimated to cost $29.1B ($13.2B paid by the United States).[27] This estimate lacks fidelity as well and can be expected to increase as more details are provided. Efforts to provide comprehensive cost estimates to facilitate a useful cost benefit analysis are currently underway.

The United States Pacific posture as it stands today is inefficient, a result of excess resources and Cold War conveniences; unbalanced towards two very capable allies with little regard for growing regional threats. In times of increasing fiscal austerity we intend to build without directly increasing military capacity. As our force will undoubtedly be getting smaller, we can no longer afford to maintain excess capacity in the Asia Pacific region while another region or a different portion of this region is deprived the resources necessary to pursue its strategy. As we explore better ways of doing business in today's environment we must consider adjustments to our Pacific posture that will enhance national security.

An Affordable Strategy-Based Posture

American presence in the Asia Pacific region has played a key role in protecting our national interests through the years. Our presence and the security it provides has also been a catalyst in the regions quest for prosperity. This presence will undoubtedly continue to serve our national interests and the interests of our regional partners for years to come. While a military presence will remain a strategic necessity, the current environment and predominant regional trends will require the United States to implement all elements of national power in what President Obama has deemed a whole-of-government approach.[28] In order to best support this approach during a period of diminishing resources the Department of Defense will need to leverage existing partner capacity, efficiently apply only those resources necessary to achieve our desired end state and guard against regional threats. As this applies to Northeast Asia and specifically South Korea and Japan, an overall reduction in military presence is warranted with a modification to the way in which we have postured our forces.

In order to optimize our posture in South Korea the United States should reduce our overall presence on the peninsula but maintain those reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI) enablers that facilitate the rapid buildup of combat power. Additionally, the United States should continue to maintain those forces which provide unique capabilities, ones that do not exist in the South Korean military or could not be generated through other means. Presence beyond these enablers should be provided by air, naval, and ground forces deployed to the peninsula on a rotational basis. In addition to serving as a deterrent, these rotational forces will be able to train for potential contingencies, familiarize themselves with the Korean Theater of Operations

(KTO), and integrate with their South Korean partners. Rotational forces would also be integral in supporting PACOM's security cooperation activities. Reducing our presence in South Korea will provide our leadership the latitude to offset potential end strength reductions, enhance presence in other parts of the Asia Pacific region, or enhance presence in other combatant command areas of responsibility. Overseas military construction requirements and entitlements, such as overseas housing allowances and cost of living allowances, will also decrease if the dependent population on the peninsula is significantly reduced. Fewer dependents on the peninsula would have the added benefit of decreasing the number of American civilians that would have to be evacuated should hostilities erupt.

In assessing the feasibility of a reduced presence on the Korean peninsula the United States must consider the impact this would have on our treaty commitments and our national interests. While the 1954 Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea authorizes the United States to base forces “in and about the territory of the Republic of Korea,” it does not require the United States to permanently base forces in South Korea. In 2004 the Bush administration agreed to maintain a force of 25,000 on the peninsula; then in 2008 Secretary of Defense Robert Gates announced that the drawdown would halt at 28,500 which would be maintained indefinitely.[29] The primary purpose of these forces is to serve as a deterrent to North Korean aggression with the expectation that additional forces would flow into theater to assist in the defense of the South.[30] In terms of our national interests, President Obama has made it clear that reversing the spread of nuclear weapons is a top priority.[31] His concern over North Korea’s nuclear program has been a recurring theme dating back to its inclusion

in the 2010 National Security Strategy.[32] To date, our efforts to deal with a nuclear North Korea have primarily been diplomatic in nature, going as far as engaging China towards this end.[33] The United States' current contribution to the defense of South Korea represents less than 5 percent of the total combat forces in South Korea.[34] At this ratio, the deterrent mechanism is not the 28,500 men and women based in South Korea but those forces and capabilities that we would bring to the fight if and when North Korea attacks. Therefore, a reduction of U.S. forces on the Korean peninsula would be feasible in that our remaining presence and ability to rapidly build combat power would continue to deter North Korea, while our efforts to address their nuclear ambitions would remain unchanged as we continue to pursue diplomatic means by which to denuclearize the peninsula.

The acceptability of United States force reductions on the Korean peninsula is the most challenging aspect of this proposal. South Korea's Defense Reform 2020 initiative calls for a yearly increase of 9.9 percent in defense spending. South Korea's current president Lee Myung-bak, reduced this to 3.6 percent in fiscal year 2010 due to economic pressures and then increased it to 6.2 percent for FY2011 after a call for increased capability following the Cheonan sinking in March 2010.[35] This, in addition to their successful efforts to shift OPCON transfer from April 2012 to December 2015, signal South Korea's desire for the United States to maintain, for the near term, its current level of commitment in South Korea. Force reductions below 28,500 would require significant diplomatic coordination as we attempt to reassure South Korean leadership that we remain committed. Assuring the South Koreans can be done by means other than military presence but requires a more creative approach than has

been seen in the past. By complying with President Obama's intent to address problems through a whole-of-government approach, the United States can reduce forces on the Korean peninsula in a manner which would be acceptable to our South Korea partners.

The sustainability of United States force reductions in South Korea is influenced by two factors: North Korea's continued restraint and South Korea's ability to counter North Korean aggression. If North Korea attempts to forcefully reunite the peninsula then, based on formal and informal commitments, the United States would be forced to redeploy in support of our partners in the South. While tensions with North Korea rise and fall on a somewhat regular basis, North Korea has not demonstrated the intent to advance southward in over sixty years. In essence, deterrence has worked and should continue to work thereby reducing the likelihood that forces would need to be redeployed. Further reducing United States presence in South Korea marks the next step in a transition that began with the signing of the Korean War Armistice in July 1957. Over the past sixty years South Korea has significantly modernized their military and continues to pursue increased capacity through the Defense Reform Plan 2020. For the South Koreans, the transfer of wartime operational control signifies a much anticipated return of military sovereignty to South Korea. It also represents another example of increased South Korean military capacity that did not exist when the United States decided to permanently base forces on the peninsula. The United States role in maintaining a balance of power on the Korean peninsula, now and in the future, is based on our commitment to the region and not the number of troops deployed there. As long as we remain committed to correcting any regional imbalances, force reductions will be sustainable over the long term.

Many view United States presence as a reflection of our commitment to a nation and correlate a decrease in presence to a decrease in commitment. In 2001 General Thomas Schwartz, Commander, United States Forces Korea (USFK), in testimony before congress stated that "It is physical, not virtual, U.S. presence that brings peace of mind to the democratic nations of the region, and provides tangible deterrence."[36] While there are means other than physical presence by which to demonstrate a nation's commitment, a perception of decreased commitment could be just as harmful. A reduction in United States presence on the Korean peninsula could translate into a lack of commitment in the eyes of our allies and potential adversaries. This risk must be addressed to ensure we do not lose influence in this part of the region. The United States must increase its diplomatic, economic, and informational efforts in order to offset decreased military presence. The Obama administration, with its renewed interest in the Asia Pacific region, is moving in this direction as they work with the South Korean government to facilitate the OPCON transfer, implement free trade agreements, and exercise patience and soft power in dealing with North Korea.

In Japan, the United States should adjust its posture to better utilize existing facilities both in Japan and across the region. While our presence in Japan will continue to facilitate regional access, we must posture ourselves in a way that supports our national interests in a fiscally responsible manner. In essence, we must maintain a balance in Japan that is politically suitable, addresses regional threats, and applies resources in a responsible manner while continuing to pursue our theater strategy. In order to address legitimate Okinawan demands for reduced United States military encroachment, Japanese and United States policymakers agreed to the current

realignment roadmap which relocates a Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) to locations in the vicinity of Andersen Air Force Base, Guam.[37] In order to accomplish this relocation the infrastructure on Guam will be upgraded, training ranges will be built, and additional facilities will be constructed on the island. Additionally, a new air base will be constructed in Northern Okinawa in order to shift air operations from a more densely populated area in Southern Okinawa.[38] However, Japan's encroachment issues can be addressed without expending the significant resources associated with this current roadmap. United States military presence on Okinawa can be reduced by moving forces to facilities within the region that support their theater mission and accommodate their training requirements. For example, the existing facilities on Guam are better suited to accommodate our aviation forces than a MAGTF. Andersen Air Force Base has the capacity and local aviation ranges to support all aspects of air operations.[39] Moving a portion of our aviation forces from Okinawa to Guam and leaving the MAGTF in Okinawa would significantly reduce the construction required on Guam. The Marine aviation assets remaining in Okinawa could operate from those facilities vacated in the move to Guam and eliminate the requirement to build another air base on Okinawa. Marine Corps presence on Okinawa would also be reduced based on recent initiatives to utilize sites in Australia and the Philippines.[40] The United States should maintain a force posture in Japan that will facilitate regional security cooperation, the RSOI of combat forces, and unique defense capabilities not resident in the Japanese Self Defense Force (JSDF). The United States will also need to maintain a robust power projection and theater lift capability in the region but our existing posture puts our Okinawan based power projection assets at undue risk in terms of their proximity to

potential threats. If hostilities commence, the vulnerability of these assets limits our ability to effectively operate. Moving the preponderance of our aviation assets from Okinawa to Andersen Air Force Base in Guam will mitigate this risk by increasing their standoff from potential threats. Relocating our aviation assets to Guam and maintaining a MAGTF on Okinawa for security cooperation tasking the United States will reduce our presence on Okinawa, increase standoff for our power projection and theater lift assets, and reduce the need for costly infrastructure enhancements on Guam. Similar to the recommendation for South Korea much of our force presence can be maintained by rotational forces that deploy unaccompanied to the region for a limited period of time. This transition to rotational forces and corresponding decrease to the 40,000 dependents based in Japan would also reduce infrastructure requirements and entitlements associated with overseas basing.

The feasibility of adjusting U.S. presence in Japan is dependent upon our ability to honor existing treaty commitments and pursue our national interests. The standing mutual defense treaty between the United States and Japan is very similar to our treaty with South Korea in that it does not obligate the United States to maintain forces in Japan.[41] Reducing United States presence in Japan would not violate this treaty and from a political standpoint may reduce a point of friction that has existed between the two nations over the course of their alliance. As with South Korea, our remaining presence would complement Japanese Self-Defense Forces until the United States could build the combat power necessary to defeat an aggressor through a combined U.S.-Japanese effort. U.S. national interests in the region would remain unchanged while the ways and means by which we pursue them would change based on this

modified posture. This balanced posture would facilitate shaping activities across the entire region, primarily conducted by our maritime forces, while our power projection and theater lift assets would be postured in a way that reduces their vulnerability to regional threats. Recent diplomatic efforts have provided additional regional basing options that reduce the need for significant infrastructure improvements on Guam.[42] Existing facilities on Guam have the capacity to accommodate the additional aviation assets moved from Okinawa.[43] While the move from Okinawa to Guam increases the distance our aviation forces would have to transit in order to reach potential objectives; our operational reach can be preserved through aviation force extension methods or deployment to forward operating sites within the region. This modified posture is feasible based on what little impact it will have on our treaty commitments and our ability to continue the pursuit of our national interests in the region.

This modified posture will likely be acceptable to the Japanese in that it achieves their political objectives of reducing U.S. military encroachment on Okinawa. The United States would need to take additional diplomatic steps to reassure Japan that through our regional presence we would continue to support their security interests. The United States' role in the defense of Taiwan has remained ambiguous. Shifting our power projection assets further to the East will undoubtedly cause concern for those proponents of Taiwanese security. The United States must continue to advocate for a peaceful resolution of the relationship between China and Taiwan while supporting Taiwan’s right to self defense. The concept of transitioning to a greater number of rotational forces and reducing the infrastructure requirements on Guam; would not benefit Guam’s local economy to the extent with which the current plan does and would

likely generate resistance from local governmental and congressional leaders.[44] The current realignment roadmap has received increasing levels of scrutiny from congress as the plan continues to be delayed and costs continue to grow. In fact some in Congress have asked the Department of Defense to explore options similar to the ones recommended here. We must also understand that the political leadership in Guam must be convinced that this alternative makes the best use of our limited resources.

The sustainability of a modified posture in Japan is largely dependent upon the continued Japanese political support of a U.S. presence in their country. While Japan has experienced two decades of economic turbulence, recent political turbulence that has shuffled six prime ministers and nine ministers of defense in the last five and a half years could threaten our continued presence. In Japan, the development of regional multi-lateral partnerships, closer economic ties to China, and growing public dissatisfaction with their government combined with resistance to a U.S. presence could threaten to marginalize our relationship with Japan and potentially jeopardize the alliance. As in the recommendation for U.S. presence in Korea, should hostilities erupt in the region, the United States may need to redeploy forces in order to fulfill our treaty obligations to Japan.

The risk associated with adjusting our force posture in Japan is minimal. The decrease in responsiveness and operational reach is offset by increased force protection and assured access. In terms of our ability to project power from Guam, the increased transit time and associated decrease in sortie rates would reduce the number of targets that could be serviced when compared to missions originating from Okinawa.[45] While this risk must be addressed in planning it does not outweigh the

benefits gained by operating from a facility that is less vulnerable to attack and possible neutralization. Additionally, by maintaining forward operating sites in Okinawa and mainland Japan, the option of redeploying assets in a time of crisis helps mitigate some of this risk. Once again, the perception that lack of committed resources equates to a lack of commitment is a very real risk and must be addressed through other elements of national power.

Mutual economic and security interests between the United States, Japan, and South Korea have forced the United States to renew its efforts in the Asia Pacific region. For the United States this presents a dilemma in that the military has underwritten the security for both nations at a significant cost to the American taxpayer; as our economy continues to stagnate and we look towards Asia for opportunities it is likely that we will have to reduce the very component of national power that forms the basis of our influence in the region. If the United States maintains the status quo in Northeast Asia we will be forced to take risk in other areas. If we withdraw too much we risk losing influence and subsequent economic opportunity in the region. The alternatives presented here for a modified posture in Japan and South Korea provide a balanced approach with which to resolve this dilemma while ensuring the United States maintains its regional influence in a fiscally responsible manner. This modified posture, tailored to the current strategic environment; leverages partner capacity, addresses regional threats, accounts for fiscal realities, and most importantly allows the United States to pursue its national interests in the region.

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